

Letter from Mabel Hubbard Bell to Eliza Symonds Bell, August 21, 1886, with transcript

Letter from Mrs. Alexander Graham Bell to Mrs. Alexander Melville Bell. Baddeck Bay, August 21, 1886. My dear Mrs. Bell:

Alec and I were very much disappointed indeed that you and Mr. Bell did not feel able to come to us. We felt sure that the strengthening life-giving qualities of this air would in a few days give you all and much more than you had lost by the fatigue of a journey here. Next time you must start before the heat of the season has its effect upon you.

I am afraid you will not be as much pleased as we should like to hear that Alec has purchased seventy acres of land here and proposes buying much more. The property lies on a projecting neck of land that separates the Bay of Baddeck from the Great Bras d'Or entrance and commands magnificent views up the Entrance, the Little Bras d'Or, Great Bras d'Or, St. Patrick's Channel with the mountains of Whycocomagh in the distance. Beautiful dense woods of fir, spruce, birch and maple cover the place from five hundred feet down to a height about twenty feet from the water's edge at the extreme point where they end in precipitous red cliffs which give the name to the whole neck — Red Head —. Alec is very happy over his new acquisition which is entirely his and particularly pleased with the pretty little harbor with its waterfall, where his yacht is to be anchored. It is very deep, small as it is, and would probably float large steamers. Alec talks of commencing work at once on a winter house for the "Alexandra" and we go tomorrow to survey our new property and decide on the exact site for our house.

We have all been very well and happy here this summer and are all as brown as nuts. Daisy especially, looks like a little Micmac papoose and is no fairer than most of them. We have also been very fortunate in our domestic arrangements. Our cook makes excellent bread and roasts and is very willing to learn and glad to have Nellie, who turns out to

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be a very accomplished cook, teach her many new dishes so that we have a very nice table. I have done a little fancy cooking as a great and novel amusement and have been preserving raspberries which are very plentiful, cheap and good. Did you have the delicious little wild strawberry in Ontario? They were very plentiful here, but unfortunately the season for them was over before we came here and could begin preserving. Our friends here tell us that the land has never been properly cultivated and its value is only now becoming apparent. They themselves exported to Boston several barrels of fruit, apples and plums and damsons and made five dollars profit on each barrel of the first named fruit. The children are delighted with their free, wild life here, the bathing and their pets, especially the little lamb who follows them everywhere and has to be kept out of the house by force. It is very pretty to see them with it, hugging and kissing it or letting it jump all over them. Alec has his tent out on the lawn and we spend a good deal of time there, it is very large and airy and a delightful place in the 3 afternoon. Our cow Mise Miggs is nearly as affectionate as Minnie the lamb, and would like to follow the cart into town every day, she runs down to the gate after it. She is a thorough-bred jersey and gives beautiful milk and butter. Alec and I have made the butter. I thought I made the first one, but found my mistake at the next attempt when I worked three hours and got nothing. The last time the work was almost entirely Alec's and it convinced him that churning was a very barbarous and primitive way of making butter and he has been constructing a windmill for driving the churn. There is so much wind that he thinks it will work nicely.

Goodbye. It is almost supper time. Wouldn't you like to look in on us in our tiny twelve feet by seven dining room and see the table set with our own butter and raspberry jelly?

Love to Mr. Bell and all with you.

Your affectionate, Mabel.